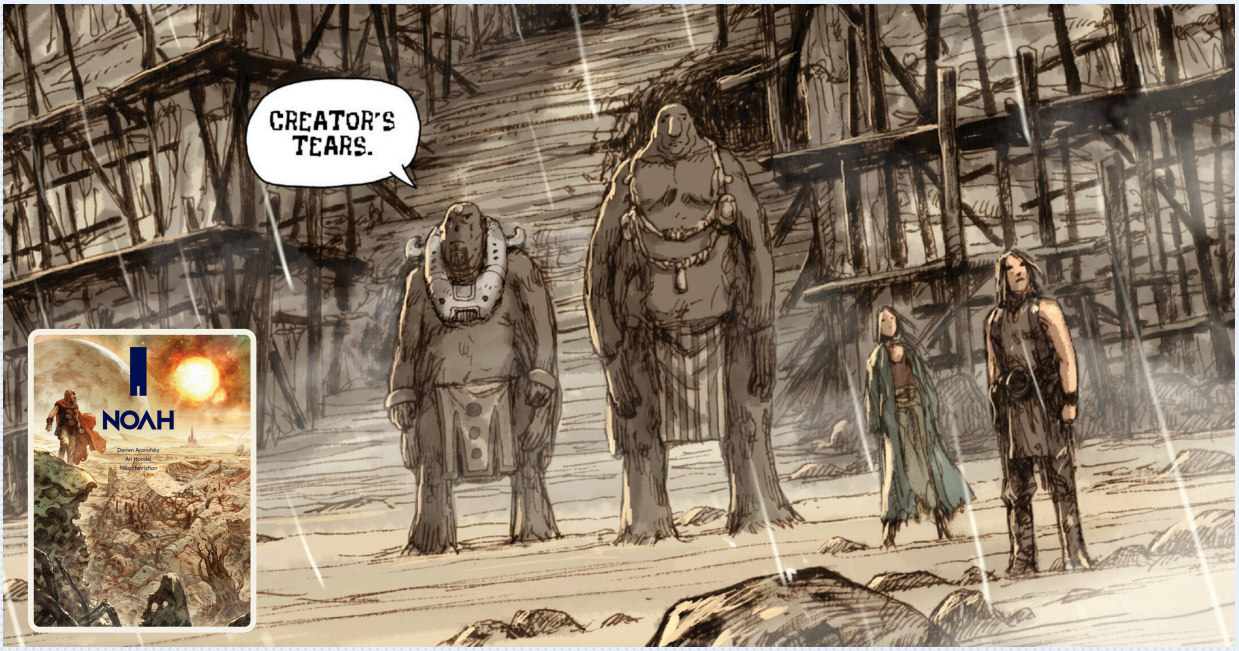
FBC-MMMM_The_Bible-02-Old Testament and the Big Other

Presentation

Imler, Henry. "The Big Other of the Old Testament". Week 2 of *MMMM, The Bible*. 2025 Fall.



Caption: Screecap from *Noah* by Afronsky. The comic is a remix of Enoch, which was a remix of Genesis, which was a remix of several remixed stories of empire.

Outline

1. Outline
2. Bibliography
    1. Excellent Deep-dive Videos
    2. Sacred Texts with Different Names for God
    3. Sacred Texts in Context(s)
    4. Kinship
    5. Anthropology
3. Opening
    1. Context a - Historical Ages of the Levant

    2. Context B - Late Bronze Age Collapse - New Peoples; New God(s)
4. Lesson 1 - Centers Use Stories to (help) Control People in the Peripheries
    1. Principle - Empire as Centers and Peripheries
    2. Example - Mesopotamian Flood Myth and Remixes
5. Lesson 2 - Stories as "Theological Combat"
    1. Context - the Shared Model of the Cosmos
    2. Example 1 - Creation is the Corpse of Tiamat
    3. Example 2 - what is the Nature of the Cosmos?
    4. Example 3 - what is to Be Human?
6. Lesson 3 - Othering Stories
    1. Example 1 - Schizmogenesis on the Pacific northwest Coast on Eve of Invasion
    2. Example 2 - Big other - Kinship and God Collapse
    3. Example 3 -big other - the Four Voices of the Torah
    4. Example 4 - Models of the Body
7. Lesson 4 - Texts Use One time Period to Discuss Concerns about Another
    1. Example - Four Layers of the Torah

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Excellent Deep-dive Videos

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2. Baker, Matthew. “**Introduction to the Bible from an Academic Point of View**.” *Useful Charts*. YouTube, November 4, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqSkXmFun14.
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    1. ---. “**Who Is Baal?** - How a Storm Deity Fought Sea, Death and YHWH Only to Become a Demon.” *Esoterica*. December 13, 2024. 31:53. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8Q9uyFASF0.
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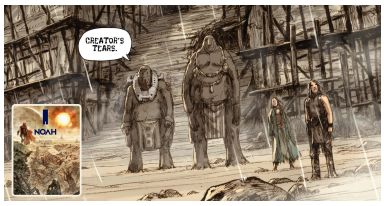
Opening

Opening Questions



How do you
- fill the world with meaning?
- understand yourself amongst "OTHERS?

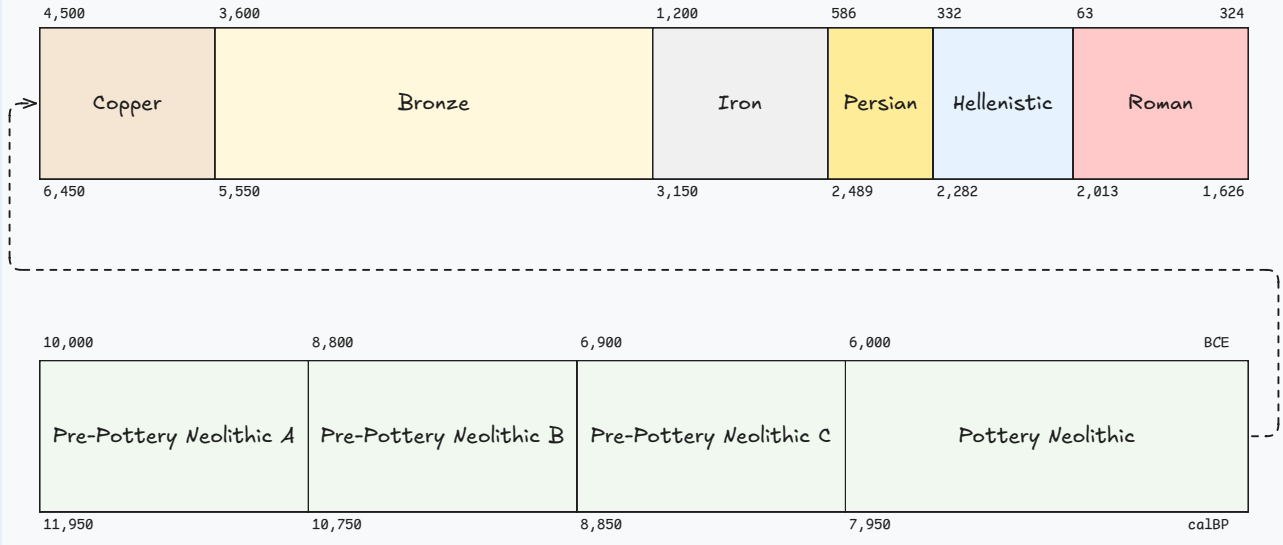
What is your "mythology of humanity"

we good? horrid?
what is the point of us?

Caption: Opening questions about filling the world with meaning and understanding yourself amongst others.

Context a - Historical Ages of the Levant

Historical Ages of the Levant



Caption: Archaeological timeline showing cultural periods in the Levant from Neolithic through Roman times. (Timeframe: 11,950-1,626 calBP / 10,000 BCE-324 CE)

Context B - Late Bronze Age Collapse - New Peoples; New God(s)

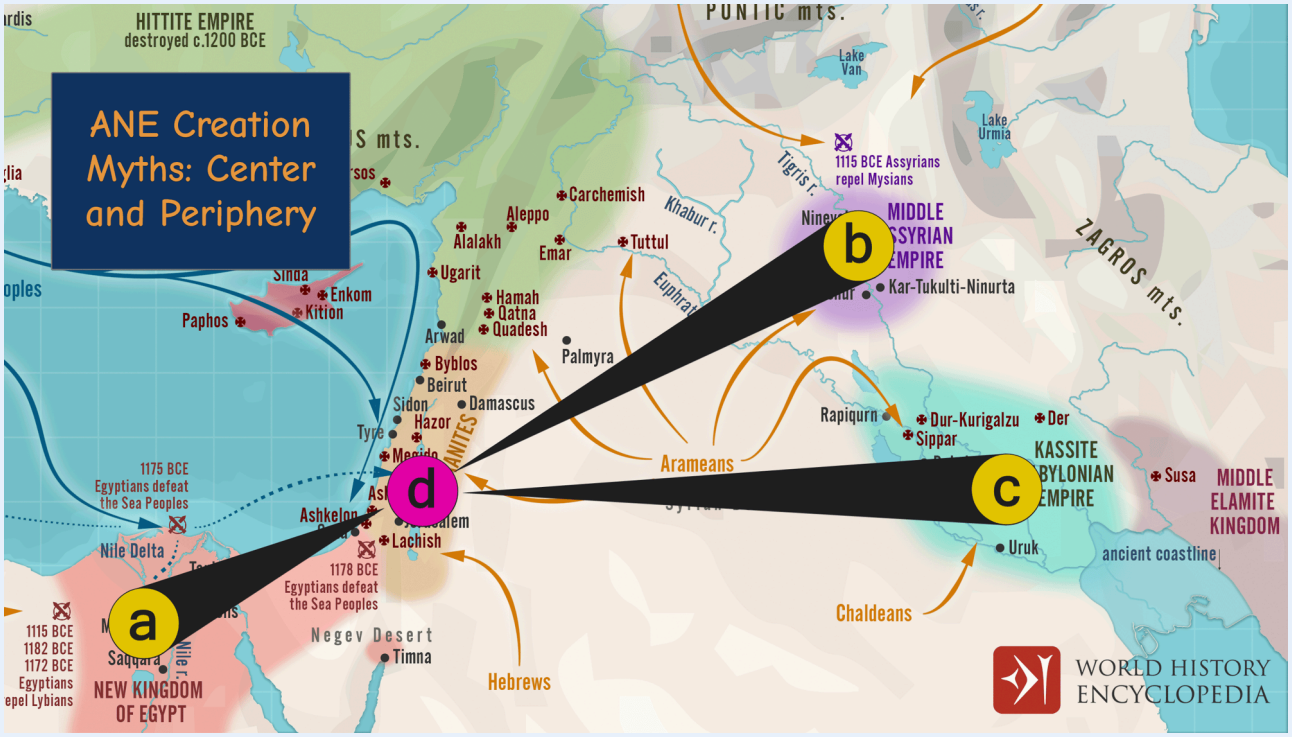
Late Bronze Age Collapse

MAP-Late Bronze Age Collapse

Caption: Geographic representation of Mediterranean-wide collapse affecting ancient civilizations. (Timeframe: ~3,150-3,100 calBP / c. 1200-1150 BCE)

Lesson 1 - Centers Use Stories to (help) Control People in the Peripheries

Principle 1 Illustration



Caption: The Levant was a periphery for several Near East Empires

Principle - Empire as Centers and Peripheries

Before the [Treaty of Westphalia (1648)], it is unhelpful to think in terms of nations, capitals, and borders. Instead we should think about **center** and **periphery**.

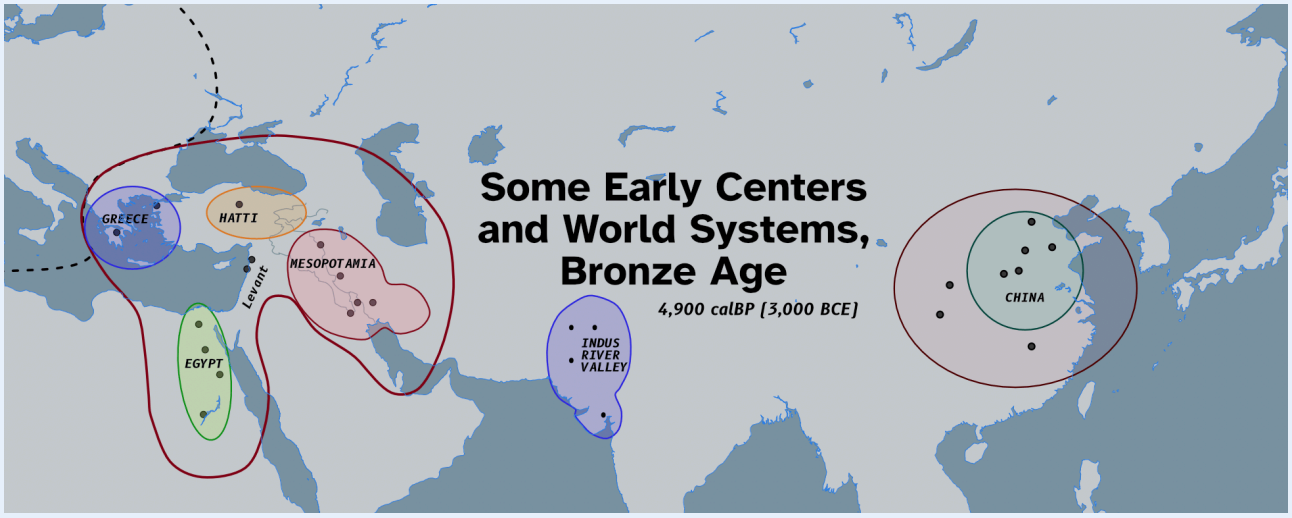
Example: Rome and Judea

[!figure]+ Roman Imperial Center-Periphery

Caption: Example of Roman imperial center projecting power over Judean periphery.

Centers contest the peripheries within mutual reach. See the how multiple centers (Babylon, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Rome) have all conquered the Levant.

Bronze Age World Systems



Caption: Early centers and world systems during Bronze Age showing interconnected civilizations. (Timeframe: 4,900 calBP / 3,000 BCE)

Key ideas

1. The Center extracts people, food, and resources from the Periphery.
2. People vote with their feet (see Great Wall, Egyptian dynasties, Bronze Age collapse, Arslantepe-Malatya, and the Uruk's development.
3. A State (Center)-Barbarian (Periphery) relation developed where the Barbarians act as a kind of shadow to the state

Example - Mesopotamian Flood Myth and Remixes

Context - Comparison of Major Flood Stories

Flood Stories Comparison

Comparison of Flood Stories

Comparison of flood stories

Feature	Sumerian Flood Story	Atrahasis Epic	Epic of Gilgamesh	Genesis J-Layer	Genesis P-Layer
Date (BCE)	c. 1900 BCE	c. 1600 BCE	c. 1200-600 BCE	c. 1000-800 BCE	c. 600-400 BCE
Date (years ago)	c. 3850 calBP	c. 3550 calBP	c. 3150-2550 calBP	c. 2950-2750 calBP	c. 2550-2350 calBP
Political Center	Sumer (Southern Mesopotamia)	Babylon (Central Mesopotamia)	Assyria/Babylon	Kingdom of Judah	Babylon (Exile) / Jerusalem (Post-exile)
Hero	Ziusudra	Atrahasis	Utnapishtim	Noah	Noah
Meaning of Hero's Name	"He of long life"	"Exceedingly wise"	"He found life"	"Rest" or "Comfort"	"Rest" or "Comfort"
Divine Instigator	Enlil	Enlil	Enlil	Yahweh	Elohim
Divine Savior	Enki	Enki/Ea	Ea	Yahweh	Elohim
Reason for Flood	Unknown (fragmentary)	Overpopulation/noise	Implied overpopulation	Human wickedness	Human corruption and violence
Ark Shape	Unknown (fragmentary)	Circular	Cube-shaped	Not specified	Rectangular
Ark Material	Unknown (fragmentary)	Reeds and bitumen	Wood and bitumen	Not specified	Gopher wood and bitumen
Ark Dimensions	Unknown (fragmentary)	14,400 cubits²	14,400 cubits²	Not specified	300x50x30 cubits
Duration of Flood	7 days and nights	7 days and nights	7 days and nights	40 days and nights	150 days
Animals Saved	Yes (details unknown)	Two-by-two	All kinds	Two of every kind	Seven pairs of clean, two pairs of unclean

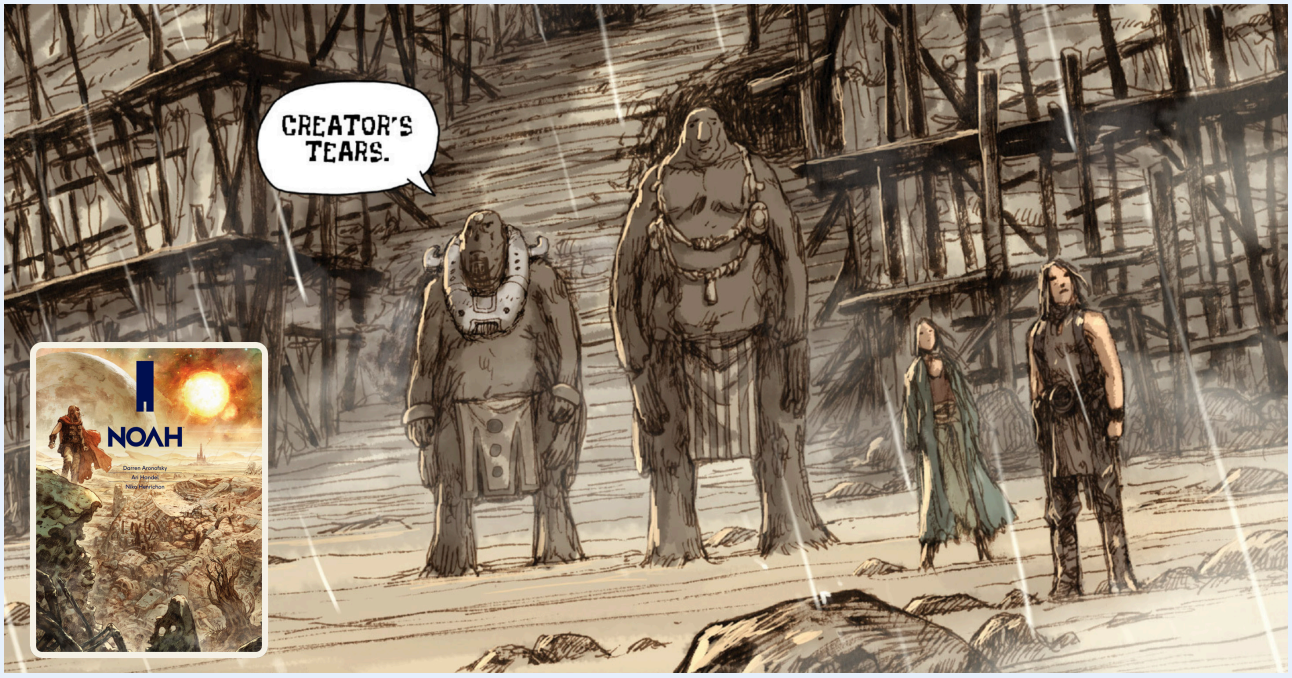
LORD GOD

Initial Source:
The Pre-Biblical Origins of Noah's Flood. Youtube, 2024. < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qw13SadIPOs>

Caption: Comparative analysis of flood narratives across ancient Near Eastern cultures. (Timeframe: 3,850-2,350 calBP / c. 1900-400 BCE)

Story 4. Creator's Tears-a Remix of a Remix of Our Remix of the Remix of the Flood Myth

Creator's Tears



Caption: Screecap from *Noah* by Afronsky. The comic is a remix of Enoch, which was a remix of Genesis, which was a remix of several remixed stories of empire.

Story 3. the Watchers - a Remix of Our Remix of the Remix of the Flood Myth

The Watchers

The Book of Enoch

Translated from Ethiopic by Richard Laurence, London, 1883.

Book of Enoch Contents

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45
46 47 48 48a 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64
65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84
85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103
104 104a 105

Enoch Chapter 1

Enoch 1:1 The word of the blessing of Enoch, how he blessed the elect and the righteous, who were to exist in the time of trouble; rejecting all the wicked and ungodly. Enoch, a righteous man, who *was* (1) with God, answered and spoke, while his eyes were open, and *while* he saw a holy vision in the heavens. This the angels showed me.

Caption: Screenshot of the Enoch, which was a remix of Genesis, which was a remix of several remixed stories of Mesopotamian empires.

Story 2. Genesis?! - Our Remix of the Remix of the Flood Myth

Ours Twoo is Remix-lord and God of the Flood

Genesis Flood Narrative

> Passage-Genesis 7 1-10

Genesis 7:1-10, NRSV

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. **2** Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; **3** and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. **4** For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." **5** And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

YHWH = LORD

Clean = 7 pairs
Unclean = 1 pair

6 Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth. **7** And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. **8** Of clean animals and of animals that are not clean and of birds and of everything that creeps on the ground, **9** two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. **10** And after seven days the waters of the flood came on the earth.

Elohim = God

Clean = 1 pairs
Unclean = 1 pair

Caption: Hebrew adaptation of flood myth showing two interwoven sources (J and P) both of which were remixes of several remixed stories of empire.

Story 1. when on High-the Remix of the Flood Myth

Opening Quote

Enuma Elish

Enuma Elish (The Babylonian Epic of Creation)

Tablet I

> 1 When the heavens above did not exist,
> 2 And earth beneath had not come into being —
> 3 There was Apsû, the first in order, their begetter,
> 4 And demiurge Tia-mat, who gave birth to them all;
> 5 They had mingled their waters together
> 6 Before meadow-land had coalesced and reed-bed was to he found —
> 7 When not one of the gods had been formed
> 8 Or had come into being, when no destinies had been decreed,
> 9 The gods were created within them:
> 10 Lah(mu and Lah(amu were formed and came into being.
> 11 While they grew and increased in stature
> 12 Anšar and Kišar, who excelled them, were created.

Caption: Opening of the Babylonian creation epic, *The Enuma Elish*. It was a remix of earlier flood stories.

Lesson 2 - Stories as "Theological Combat"

Context - the Shared Model of the Cosmos

Shared Cosmic Model

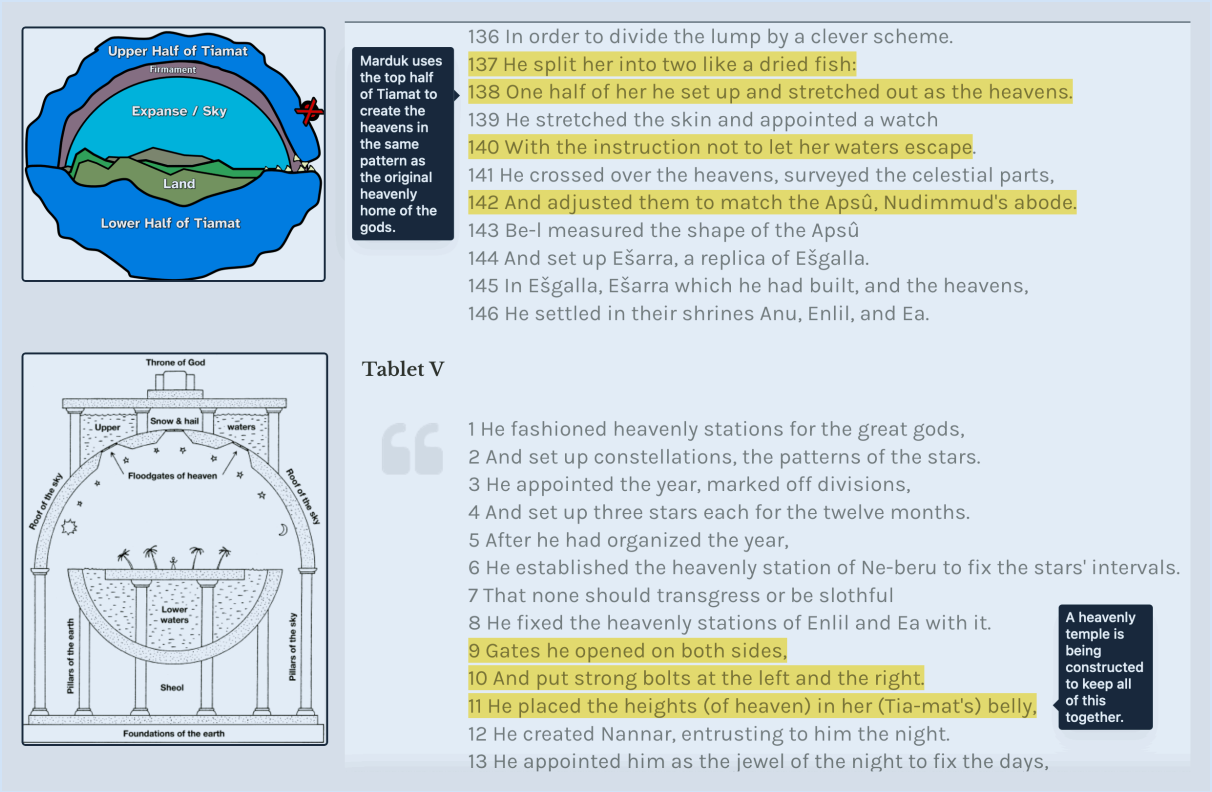
Caption: Ancient Greek and Near Eastern cosmological understanding showing three-tiered universe.

Example 1 - Creation is the Corpse of Tiamat

Corpse of Tiamat Cosmology

The Corpse of Tiamat

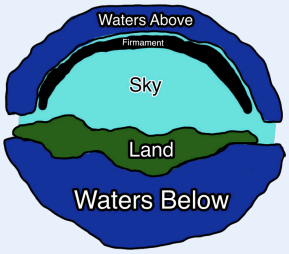
Corpse of Tiamat as the Cosmos and Heavenly Temple


Upper Half of Tiamat
Firmament
Expanse / Sky
Land
Lower Half of Tiamat
Marduk uses the top half of Tiamat to create the heavens in the same pattern as the original heavenly home of the gods.
136 In order to divide the lump by a clever scheme.
137 He split her into two like a dried fish:
138 One half of her he set up and stretched out as the heavens.
139 He stretched the skin and appointed a watch
140 With the instruction not to let her waters escape.
141 He crossed over the heavens, surveyed the celestial parts,
142 And adjusted them to match the Apsû, Nudimmud's abode.
143 Be-l measured the shape of the Apsû
144 And set up Ešarra, a replica of Ešgalla.
145 In Ešgalla, Ešarra which he had built, and the heavens,
146 He settled in their shrines Anu, Enlil, and Ea.
Throne of God
Upper
Snow & hail
waters
Floodgates of heaven
Roof of the sky
Roof of the sky
Lower waters
Pillars of the earth
Pillars of the sky
Sheol
Foundations of the earth
Tablet V
1 He fashioned heavenly stations for the great gods,
2 And set up constellations, the patterns of the stars.
3 He appointed the year, marked off divisions,
4 And set up three stars each for the twelve months.
5 After he had organized the year,
6 He established the heavenly station of Ne-beru to fix the stars' intervals.
7 That none should transgress or be slothful
8 He fixed the heavenly stations of Enlil and Ea with it.
9 Gates he opened on both sides,
10 And put strong bolts at the left and the right.
11 He placed the heights (of heaven) in her (Tia-mat's) belly,
12 He created Nannar, entrusting to him the night.
13 He appointed him as the jewel of the night to fix the days,
A heavenly temple is being constructed to keep all of this together.

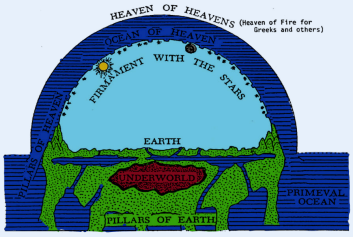
Caption: Babylonian creation myth showing how Tiamat's body becomes the cosmos.

Example 2 - what is the Nature of the Cosmos?

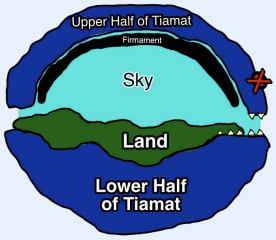
Cosmic Comparisons



Cosmos in Genesis 1



General ANE Picture



Cosmos in Enuma Elish

Caption: Comparison of cosmic models between Genesis, general ANE, and Enuma Elish.

Example 3 - what is to Be Human?

Enuma Elish vs Genesis

2 Stories of the Creation of Humankind in Genesis 1 and 2

26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind[c] in our image, according to
our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and
over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals
of the earth,[d] and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the
earth."
27 So God created humankind[e] in his image,
in the image of God he created them;[f]
male and female he created them.
28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the
sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves
upon the earth." 29 God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding
seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its
fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and
to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth,
everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for
food." And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and
indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning,
the sixth day.

From <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1-3&version=NRSV>

Creation of Humanity in Tablet V of the Enuma Elish

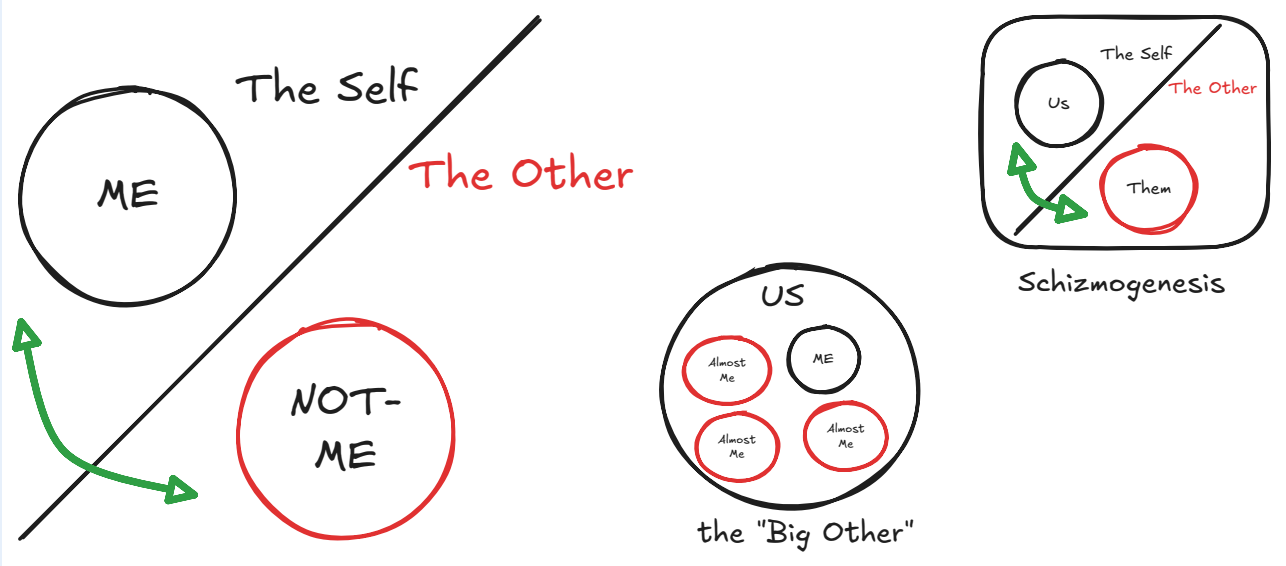
17 Marduk assembled the great gods,
18 Using gracious direction as he gave his order,
19 As he spoke the gods heeded him:
20 The king addressed a word to the Anunnaki,
21 "Your former oath was true indeed,
22 (Now also) tell me the solemn truth:
23 Who is the one who instigated warfare,
24 Who made Tia-mat rebel, and set battle in motion?
25 Let him who instigated warfare be given up
26 That I may lay his punishment on him; but you sit and rest.
27 The Igigi, the great gods, answered him,
28 That is, Lugaldimmerankia, the counsellor of the gods, the lord,
29 "Qingu is the one who instigated warfare,
30 Who made Tia-mat rebel and set battle in motion."
31 They bound him, holding him before Ea,
32 They inflicted the penalty on him and severed his blood-vessels.
33 From his blood he (Ea) created mankind,
34 On whom he imposed the service of the gods, and set the gods free.

From <https://www.ancient.eu/article/225/enuma-elish---the-babylonian-epic-of-creation---fu/>

Caption: Creation of Humanity in the Enuma Elish and Genesis 1. Notice the types of things each process produces. One is magnificent, one is a wretch.

Lesson 3 - Othering Stories

Self/Other Understanding Framework



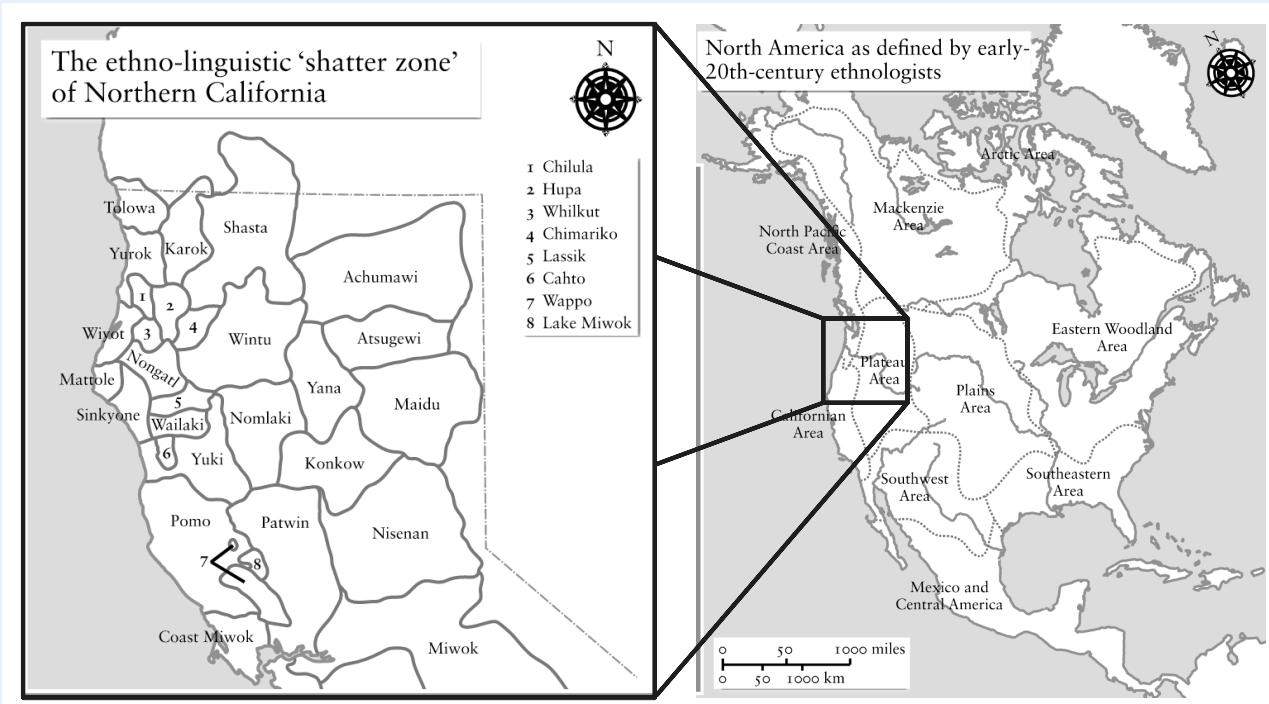
Humans often come to understand what they *are* by what they *are not*.

- Unifying - Big Other - Who is enough like me?

- Shattering - Schizmogenesis - Creation of a new peoples through the splitting of a group.

Example 1 - Schizmogenesis on the Pacific northwest Coast on Eve of Invasion

North American Culture Areas

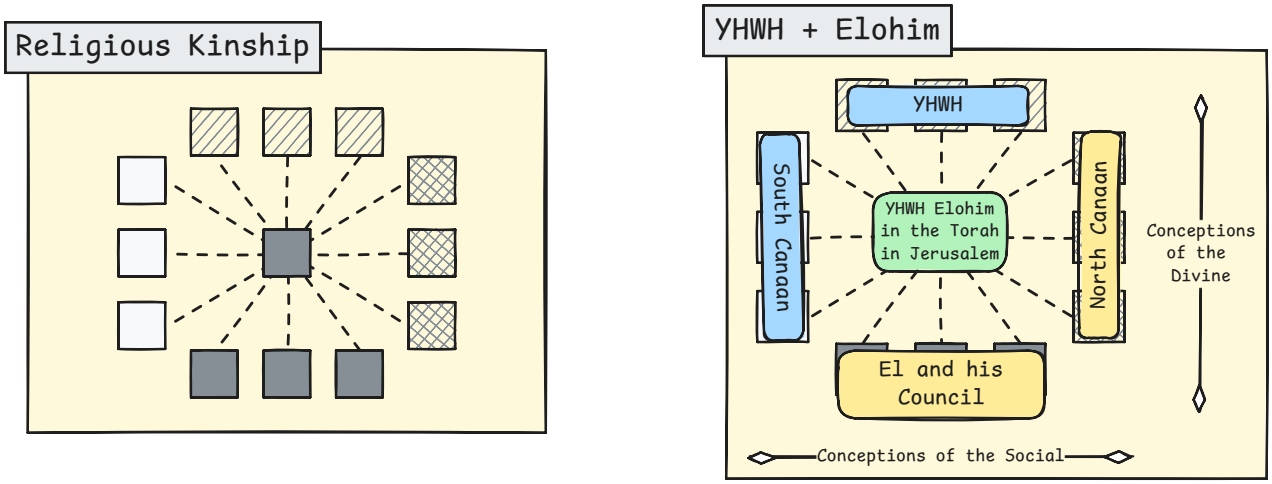


Caption: Where the Pacific Northwest Coast and Californian culture areas of Turtle Island meet there is what we call "a shatter zone" that is often a result of people running away or fending off a predatory neighboor.

Source: Wengrow, David, and David Graeber. "'Many Seasons Ago': Slavery and Its Rejection among Foragers on the Pacific Coast of North America." *American Anthropologist* 120, no. 2 (2018): 237–49. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.12969.

Example 2 - Big other - Kinship and God Collapse

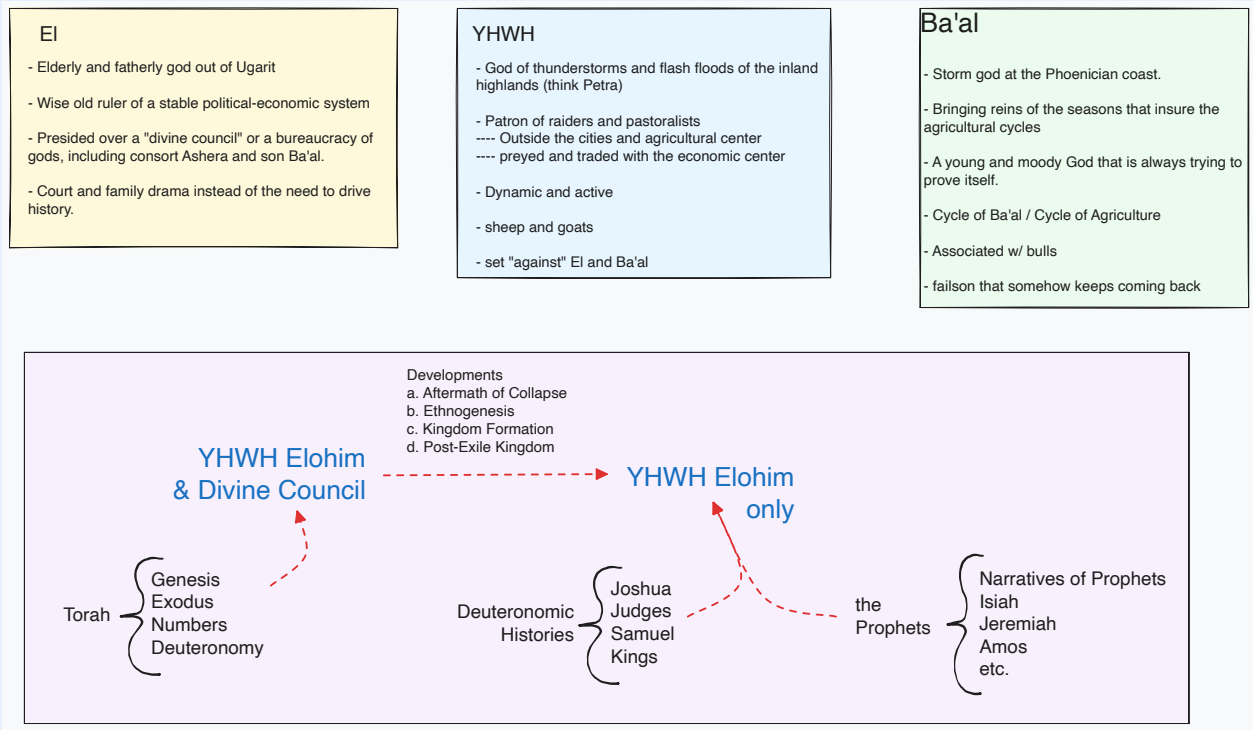
Hebrew Ethnogenesis and God Collapse



Caption: Conceptual model of Hebrew religious development from polytheism to monotheism. (Timeframe: 3,300-2,400 calBP / 1350-450 BCE)
Source: Adaptation of kinship diagrams in (De Jorio, 2005)

Chart-from Yhwh and El's Council to Monotheism

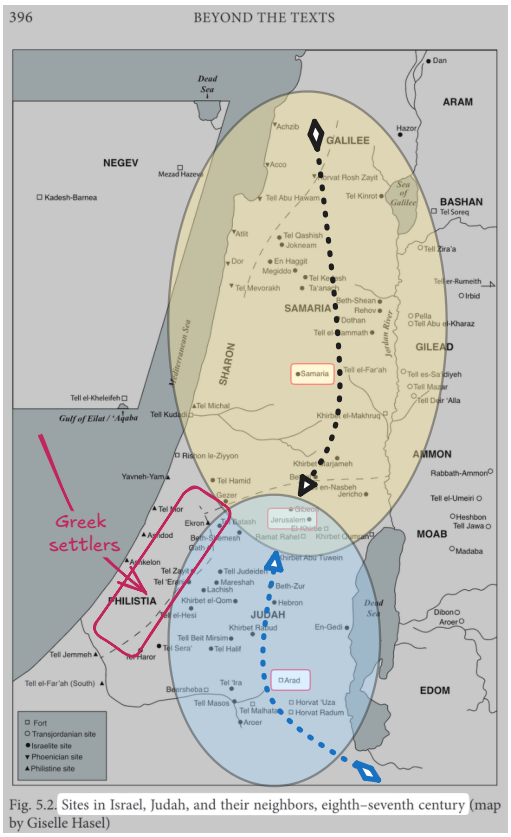
Hebrew God Development

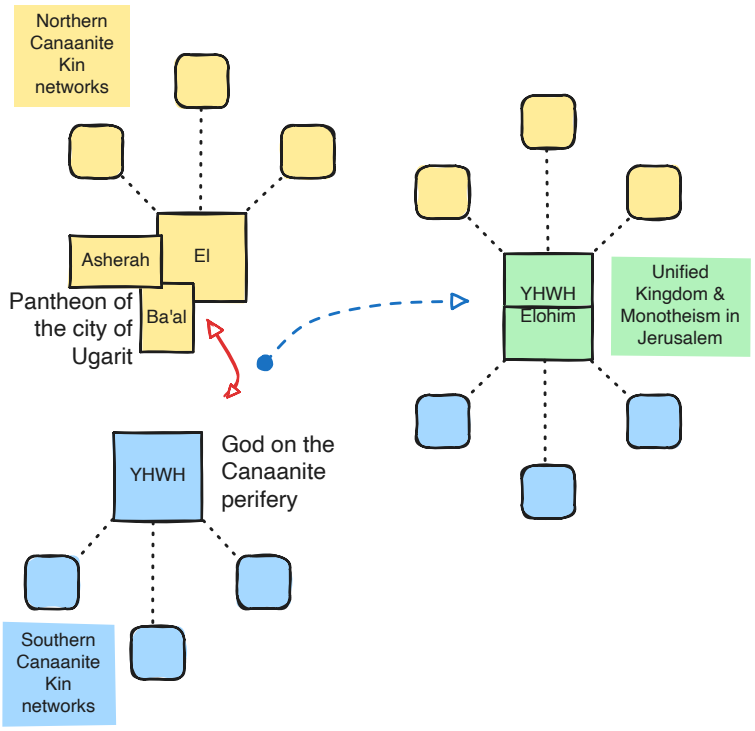

El
- Elderly and fatherly god out of Ugarit
- Wise old ruler of a stable political-economic system
- Presided over a "divine council" or a bureaucracy of gods, including consort Ashera and son Ba'al.
- Court and family drama instead of the need to drive history.
YHWH
- God of thunderstorms and flash floods of the inland highlands (think Petra)
- Patron of raiders and pastoralists
---- Outside the cities and agricultural center
---- preyed and traded with the economic center
- Dynamic and active
- sheep and goats
- set "against" El and Ba'al
Ba'al
- Storm god at the Phoenician coast.
- Bringing reins of the seasons that insure the agricultural cycles
- A young and moody God that is always trying to prove itself.
- Cycle of Ba'al / Cycle of Agriculture
- Associated w/ bulls
- failson that somehow keeps coming back
Developments
a. Aftermath of Collapse
b. Ethnogenesis
c. Kingdom Formation
d. Post-Exile Kingdom
YHWH Elohim & Divine Council
YHWH Elohim only
Torah
Genesis
Exodus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Deuteronomic Histories
Joshua
Judges
Samuel
Kings
the Prophets
Narratives of Prophets
Isiah
Jeremiah
Amos
etc.

Caption: How the "god-collapse" shows up in the Hebrew Bible.

Example-big Other-levant-god Collapse-kinship Map

God and Kinship Collapse





Caption: Map of the Levant showing archeological and cultuic sites in the Levant during the Iron Age. Coming out of the Late Bronze Age collapse was a remarkable period of religious innovation. El and his Council of Canaan and YHWH of the Southern Hills merged, theologically and politically into YHWH Elohim, the one true God by the time of the Second Temple Period.

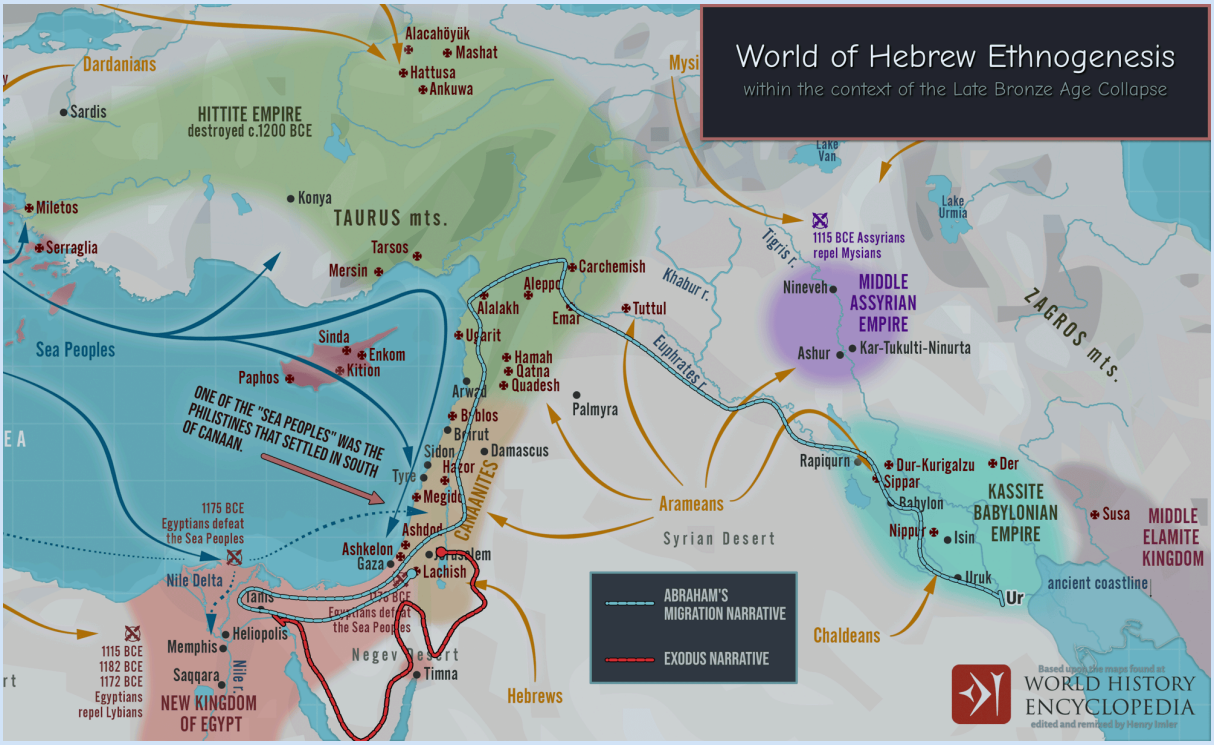
This shows both the kinship networks and geographical centers *change* and merge into something new, but *highly* conditioned by the old. (Timeframe: 3,300-2,400 calBP / 1350-450 BCE)

MAP-LEV-3300-HEBREW-ETHNOGENESIS

Hebrew Ethnogenesis Map

> MAP-LEV-3300-Hebrew-Ethnogenesis

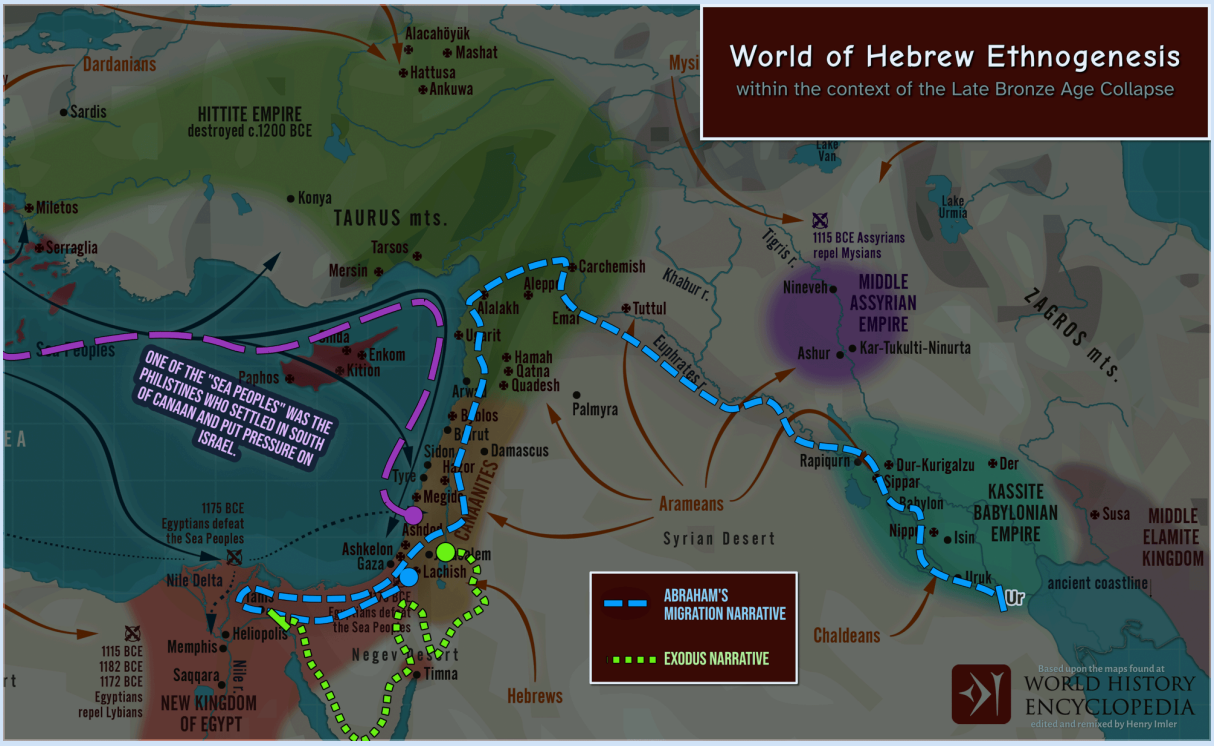
Map



Caption: World of Hebrew Ethnogenesis within the context of the Late Bronze Age Collapse. In the story, Abram (Abraham) is a migrant from Ur, one of the oldest cities in the excavated world. The Philistines, one of the main antagonists later in the Bible are one of the “Sea Peoples” from Greece that settled the Levant after fleeing the collapse of their own part of the Mediterranean.

Sources: Custom map made from an original map from World History Encyclopedia and Eric Cline’s work.

Map



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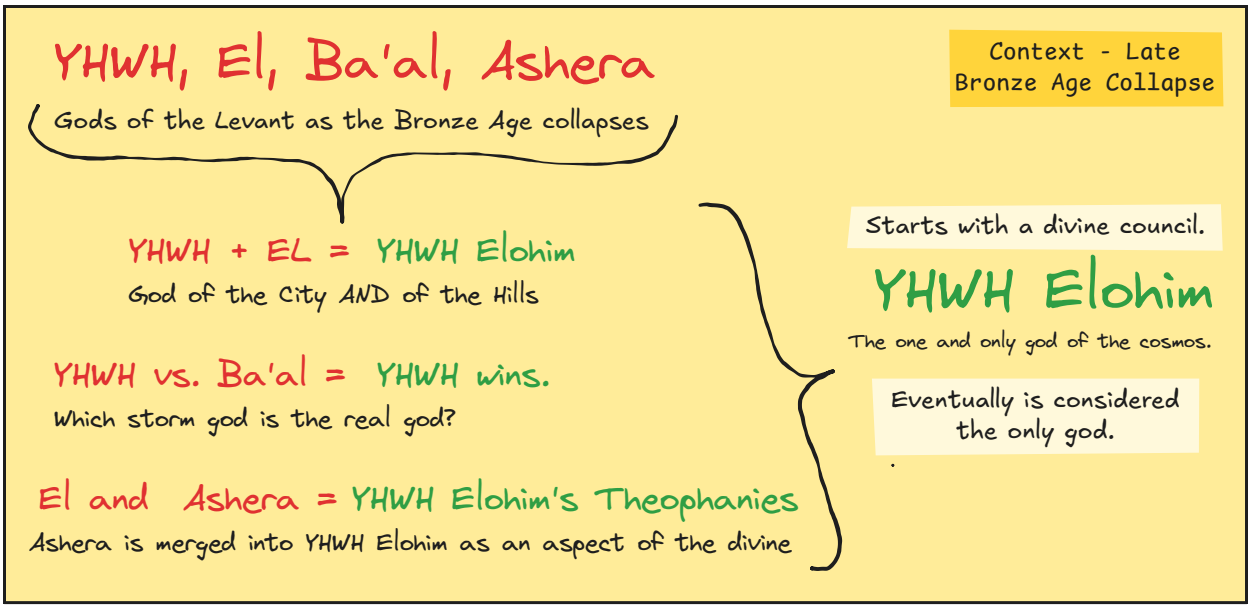
Sources: Custom map made from an original map from World History Encyclopedia and Eric Cline’s work.

Caption: Abraham's story is one of God calling him out of Ur and creating a new people in the Levant, after dealings with Egypt.

Geographic context of Hebrew identity creation after the Late Bronze Age Collapse. (Timeframe: ~3,300 calBP / ~1350 BCE)

Levant-god Collapse-yhwh-elohim

God Collapse Process

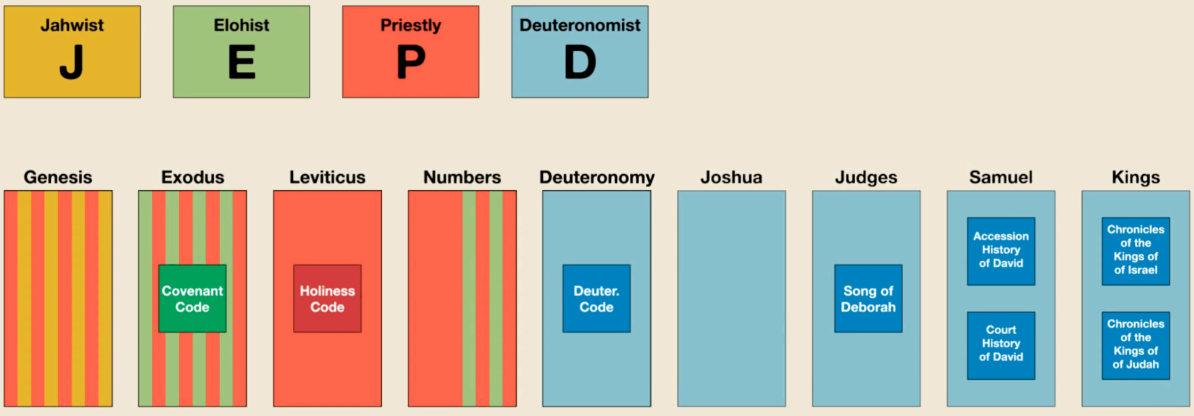

YHWH, El, Ba'al, Ashera
Gods of the Levant as the Bronze Age collapses
Context - Late Bronze Age Collapse
YHWH + EL = YHWH Elohim
God of the City AND of the Hills
YHWH vs. Ba'al = YHWH wins.
Which storm god is the real god?
El and Ashera = YHWH Elohim's Theophanies
Ashera is merged into YHWH Elohim as an aspect of the divine
Starts with a divine council.
YHWH Elohim
The one and only god of the cosmos.
Eventually is considered the only god.

Process of God-Collapse and Hebrew Ethnogenesis

Caption: The story of YHWH is one of a God of the Hills merging with El, the father-god of Ugarit and theological defeat of Ba'al. (Timeframe: 3,300-2,400 calBP / 1350-450 BCE)

Example 3 -big other - the Four Voices of the Torah

Four Voices of Torah

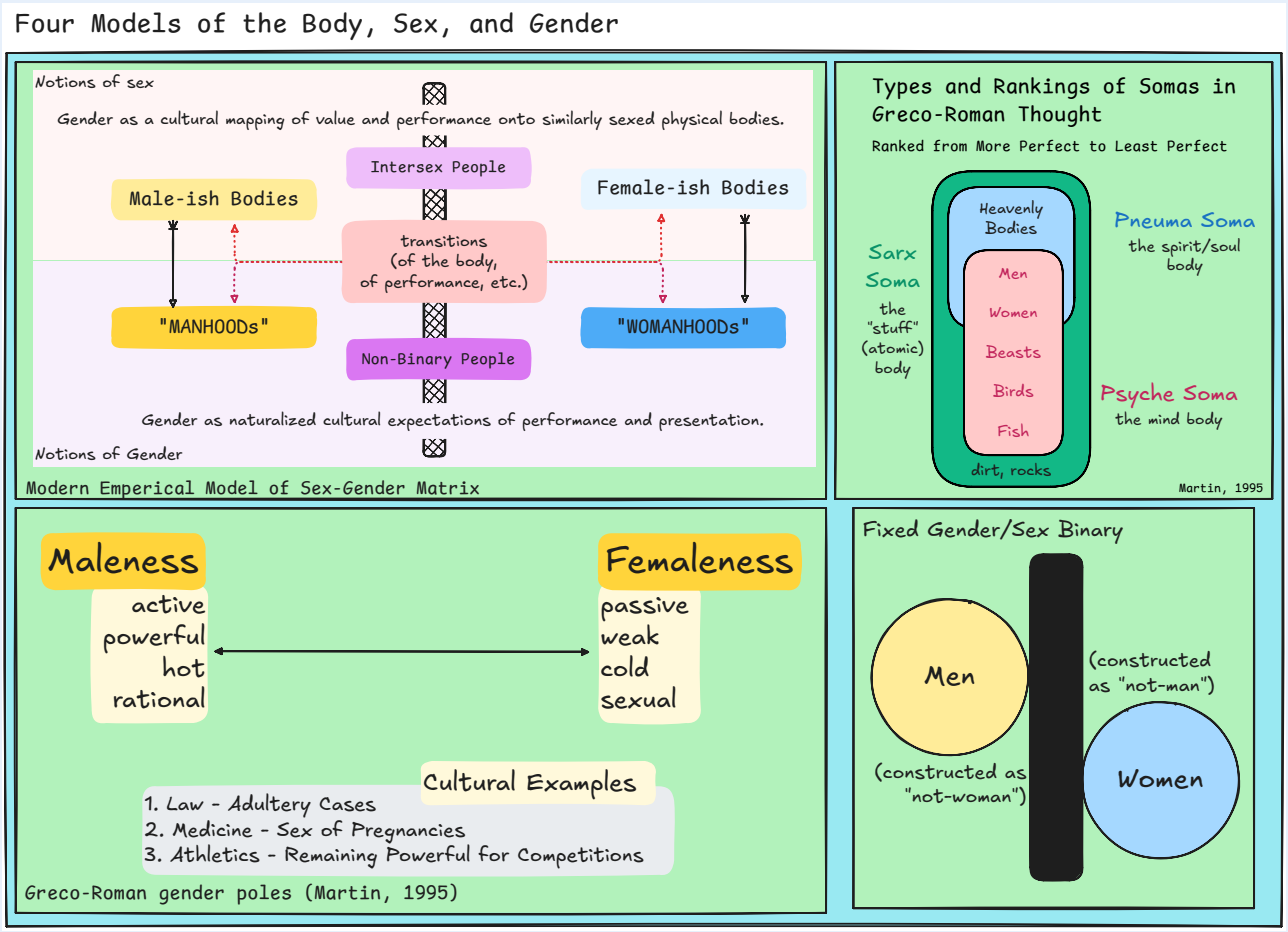


Caption: Documentary hypothesis showing literary sources in biblical composition.

(Timeframe: 2,850-2,200 calBP / 900-250 BCE)

Example 4 - Models of the Body

Models of Body and Gender

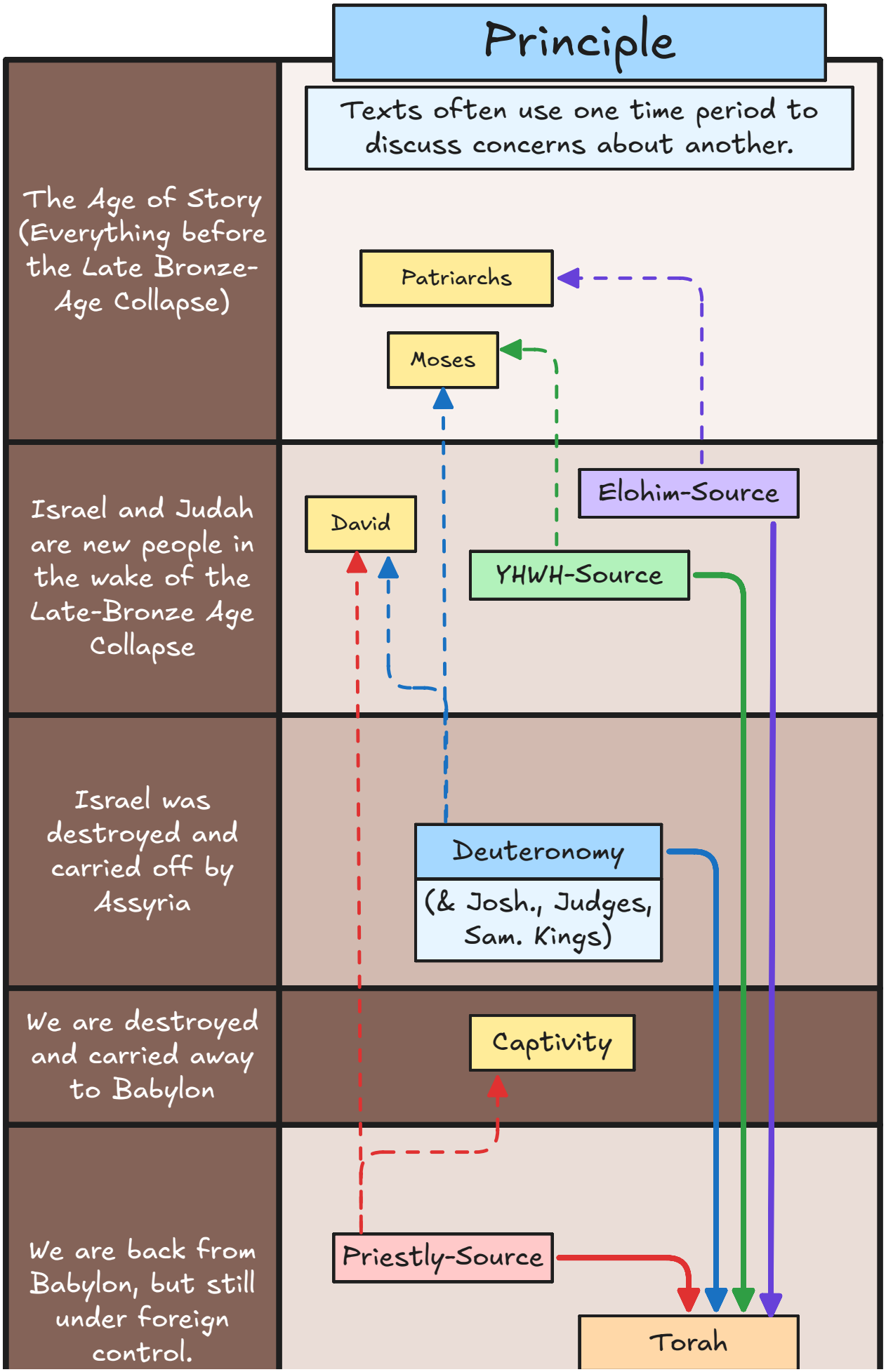


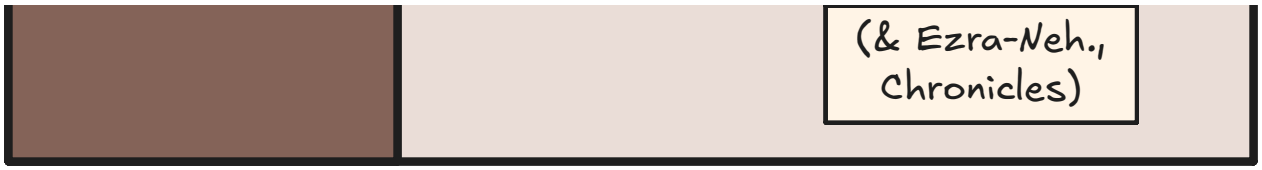
Caption: Comparative analysis of gender concepts from Greco-Roman to modern times.
(Timeframe: 2,100 calBP-present / 100 BCE-2025 CE)

Lesson 4 - Texts Use One time Period to Discuss Concerns about Another

Example - Four Layers of the Torah

Torah Construction and Concerns

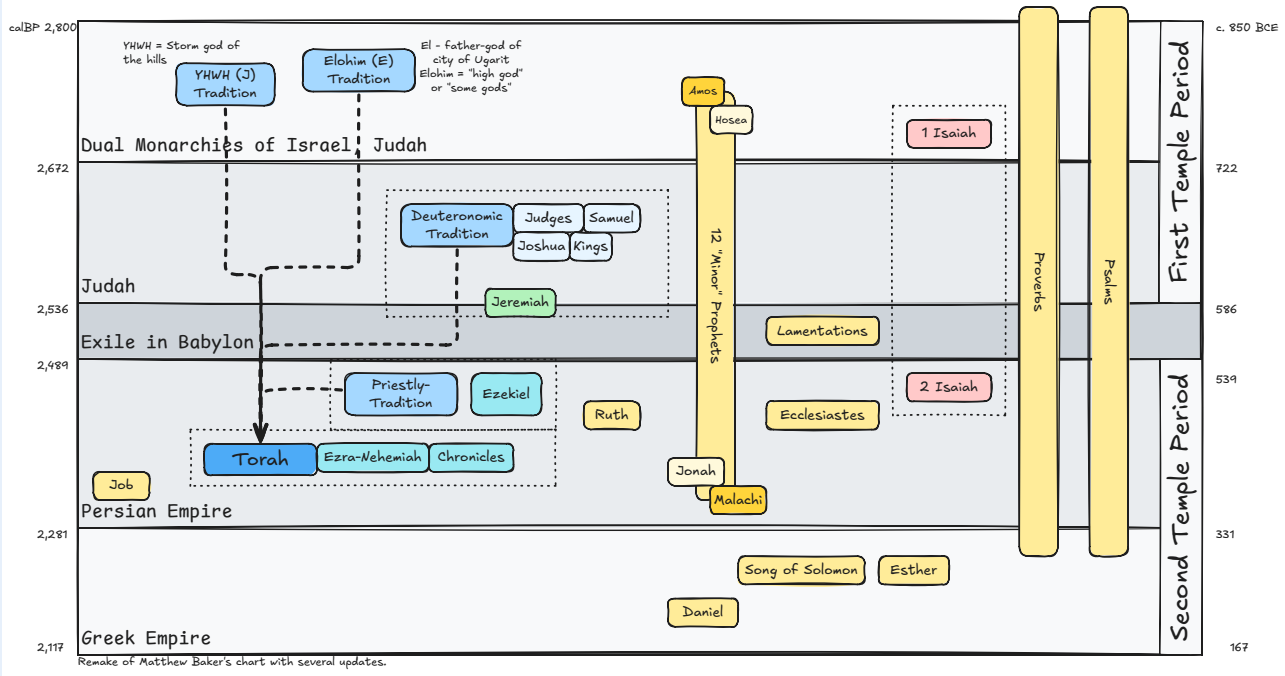

Principle
Texts often use one time period to discuss concerns about another.
The Age of Story (Everything before the Late Bronze-Age Collapse)
Patriarchs
Moses
Israel and Judah are new people in the wake of the Late-Bronze Age Collapse
David
Elohim-Source
YHWH-Source
Israel was destroyed and carried off by Assyria
Deuteronomy
(& Josh., Judges, Sam. Kings)
We are destroyed and carried away to Babylon
Captivity
We are back from Babylon, but still under foreign control.
Priestly-Source
Torah



Caption: Timeline showing how different historical periods influenced biblical text composition. (Timeframe: 3,300-2,200 calBP / 1350-250 BCE)

Board-timeline of Torah

Timeline of Torah Development



Caption: Comprehensive chronological development of biblical literature across Temple periods. (Timeframe: 2,800-2,117 calBP / 850-167 BCE)